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THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCREECH OWL.

BY WM. G. SMITH, LOVELAND, COL.

This little owl is a resident in the lower mountainous portions of Colorado at all season, although a shiftless one, sometimes being numerous in certain localities, while on the next visit not one can be found. It appears to be strictly nocturnal in its movements and generally hides during the day in some hollow tree, in the absence of which it selects some secluded spot where the vegetation is very dense, as it is incessantly hunted by the villainous Black-billed Magpie.

It commences to breed early in April. I took a full set as early as the fourth of that month, this year. It deposits its eggs (usually four) in some hollow tree as a rule, but I have found them in an old deserted magpie's nest; in this case, as also when laid in a hollow tree, it is sparingly lined with a few feathers. Both birds may occasionally be found on the eggs at one time, and are very loth to leave: nothing short of physical persuasion will tempt them to leave their nest.

A few days ago my son took out two old birds from a hollow tree and then discovered two eggs which he let remain; and his hand was scarcely drawn from the hole before one old bird bolted in again. Any ordinary bird would consider themselves grossly insulted and forsake their nest; not so with *Megascops asio maxwelliae*, as in this case they went right along with duties and laid their full complement of eggs. As a rule they lay an egg each day until four is laid, but in some cases it takes them two weeks to get together their full clutch, and consequently some birds hatch out long before the others, as they appear to set on the eggs from the start.

The Rocky Mountain variety is much lighter in color than the eastern form, having but very little or no tawny on its wings and body, and is a very pretty bird. The eggs are nearly round, pure white and measure about 1.50x1.20. I never found more than four in a clutch and often but three.